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STATE FOR NEA, PA - TAPPAN, DRL, INR, IIP, ECA  
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SUBJECT: CONSTITUTION OUTREACH PROGRAMMING

REF: A.(C)Basrah 109

1. (LOU) SUMMARY. Over the past few months, post (principally PAS and USAID) has sponsored or funded a substantial level of programming relating to Iraq's current constitutional debate. This programming has involved airlifting Iraqi officials to meet with local audiences to discuss the constitution, encouraging prominent Iraqis to appear on American TV, USAID-funded technical assistance to the National Assembly, routine distributions of Arabic language materials, PAS and USAID small grants, ECA exchanges, and titles purchased through State Department Arabic book translation programs. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) In addition to the talking points, op-eds and briefings produced here and in Washington over the past few weeks to reinforce our central USG public themes and messages relating to the drafting and ratifying of a new Iraqi constitution, post has also engaged in parallel program activity to inform Iraqis and engage them in the process. We have concentrated our efforts along the lines outlined below.

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Taking the (Iraqi) Government  
To the People  
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3. (LOU) Working with Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I - Strategic Effects Directorate) and with the office of Prime Minister al-Ja'afari's spokesman (Leith Kubba), post created a joint (U.S.-U.K.-ITG) communications working group, whose first concrete project was to launch a joint effort to take members of the government, members of the national assembly, and Baghdad-based media out to different provincial capitals, two-to-three times per week, to interact with local political leaders and public audiences on the new constitution. Our regional field colleagues are providing the on-site planning and support, MNC-I through MNF-I is providing the airlift (plus most ground transportation and security), and Embassy PA is working with the PM spokesman's office to select the individual participants, including traveling media.

A. On Monday Aug 29, Dr. Kubba himself, along with the Minister of Industry and Minerals, Osama Al Najafi, traveled to Mosul along with ten journalists (8 Iraqi/pan-Arab and 2 Western) on the inaugural leg of this program. Both officials were warmly welcomed by a large crowd on the steps of the Governing Center enroute to a town meeting inside where a wide-ranging discussion of the constitution took place in front of the cameras. In a practice that has been continued for later visits, Al Najafi was chosen because of his personal ties to the visited city. The large number (30) of Mosul-based media who turned out to follow this program was partly in response to Al Najafi's personal popularity. After lunch with local political leaders and individual media interviews, the traveling party then visited an Iraqi police academy. As Baghdad's Ad-Dustour newspaper noted the next day, "they told the people of Mosul to participate in the upcoming referendum, by voting yes or no, because the new constitution is for all Iraqis."

B. Two days later, Education Minister Dr. Abdul Falah al Sudani, TNA member Dr. Qusai Abdul Wahab, and TNA Constitutional Committee member Hussein Athab Thaban, traveled to the southern city of Basrah for a similar program. It began with a call on the governor, Mohammed Mohamed Musbah al-Oweili, and other prominent Basrawis, both Shia'a and Sunni (reftel). During their 90-minute town hall forum, the Baghdad delegation led a discussion on the importance and inclusiveness of the constitution.

Fifty local media were in attendance, in addition to the ten who came from Baghdad. TNA member Sheikh Mansoor al-Kanaan, also present, opened the town hall discussion with positive statements about the importance of the constitution, calling it "a contract between all Iraqis and their government." After the town hall meeting and lunch, the delegation visited the Basrah courthouse and judicial center, currently being rebuilt by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with local Basrah construction firms. The on-site engineer, an Iraqi woman named Hana Esmail, showed the group around the 80 per cent complete site. Overall, the Basrah visit was notable for the willingness of local Sunni leaders to debate their concerns openly.

1C. The third trip, on Monday September 5, took the Minister of Environment and Human Rights, Narmeen Uthman, and TNA member Mullah Ahmed al-Berznji (a Sunni Kurd) to Erbil. Working with our regional embassy office there, Governor Nawazd Hadi set up a "majlis" (council meeting) for local dignitaries and later hosted a lunch. The discussion event lasted two hours, covered by national and local media, as well as by a BBC crew we brought from Baghdad. A notable quote from this proceeding came from TNA member al-Berznji, who told the assembly "We should not always rely on the Americans, but learn to rely on ourselves."

1D. The fourth trip, on September 7, took Agriculture Minister Ali Al-Bahadalil and TNA member Dr. Hanan al-Fatlawi to Hillah. In addition to the usual events, including another spirited town hall meeting, this visit also included a tour of a newly commissioned power substation. Once again our escorts heard repeated praise for the willingness of central government officials to travel to the provinces to interact with local people. A second stop planned for this day, to Diwaniyah, had to be postponed due to aircraft problems, but a large crowd had already been assembled there, and we look forward to returning to Diwaniyah soon as part of a future trip.

1E. On September 11, Minister of State for Civil Society Alla Abib Kazim al-Safi, TNA member Sooriya Abd al-Khadem (Shi'a from Diyala), and TNA member Moayad al-Obaydi (Sunni from Ba'aqubah) traveled to Ba'aqubah for a similar program with officials and invited guests from Diyala province. In addition to their town hall event, this group toured a primary care facility being built with USAID funds. Comment from an Arabic-speaking CNN producer on the trip: "the people wonder why this was Baghdad's first official visit..."

1F. Other provincial visits are in planning, 2-3 per week, through the scheduled constitution referendum date of October 15. Embassy PA and MNF-I continue to work closely with Embassy regional posts (REOs and SETs) on visit planning, especially the airlift details, with each providing an escort officer for the traveling media. Although actual media coverage of these events has ranged from very good to light, the events themselves have invariably been valuable contributions to our overall effort to reach out to the Iraqi people to engage in the constitutional process.

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Facilitating Surrogates  
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14. (SBU) Following the completion of the draft permanent constitution by the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) on August 28, post approached two prominent Sunni political leaders, Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) Deputy President Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawar and TNA President Hajim al-Hasani, to speak out publicly on the merits of supporting the new constitution. Despite busy travel schedules this month, both have worked through their staffs and us to make contact with State/PA for assistance in booking appearances on American TV news programs to speak about the constitution.

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USAID Programs  
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15. (SBU) In addition to Embassy PA working with the military here, USAID is funding (total national governance, constitution and elections portfolio is currently \$126 million) a wide array of NGO activity in support of the constitution process. The majority of USAID's work in Iraq is conducted in

full partnership with local organizations.

1A. Technical assistance to the Constitutional Committee (CC): Facilitated the development of rules and procedures for the TNA; organized seminars on legislative drafting; provided 13 international constitutional experts; prepared legal memoranda for the CC; held consultations, seminars and workshops on constitutional development; provided comparative research and background materials on constitutional law issues and assistance to the CC; and provided comprehensive technical assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) to convene the referendum and follow-on elections.

1B. Support to women officials and civic leaders: Assisted women leaders from the TNA to include fundamental rights for women in the final document; supported national workshops for women leaders; provided advocacy training to groups focused on strengthening gender equality in the constitution; conducted seminars for women lawyers on the role of the constitution in protecting citizen rights; provided training to women TNA members; provided expert advisors on the role of women and human rights in constitution-drafting; developed and distributed 75,000 copies of its "Popular Guide to Women and the Constitution;" provided a \$500,000 grant to a local NGO association to launch conferences, leaflet distributions, and television spots promoting women's rights in a constitutional democracy; supported training on the CEDAW across Iraq to raise awareness of international standards on women's issues; hosted public events to promote women's political participation and to discuss ways to promote gender equality; provided small grants to women's advocacy groups working on the constitution.

1C. Support for public outreach and civic education on the constitution: Assisted the development of a public communications strategy for the Constitutional Committee; identified and trained PA officers; assisted in producing press releases on the constitutional process; trained staff of the Constitutional Committee's outreach unit; supported the convening of constitutional workshops across all 18 governorates (more than 4,770 workshops and 142,601 participants to date, over 1/3 women); sponsored the collection and data analysis of 100,000 public questionnaires completed by residents of all 18 governorates; supported the design, publication, and distribution of 1.35 million print items on basic concepts of the constitution; weekly 90-minute television programs to promote the constitutional process; radio programs; televised town hall meetings; TV talk shows with members of the Constitutional Committee.

1D. Outreach to Sunni Arab areas: working with Sunni tribal and religious leaders on outreach efforts; facilitated the delivery of 5,000 Constitutional Committee posters to Fallujah; sponsored 861 constitutional workshops in Sunni Arab communities in six governorates, reaching 25,388 participants.

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Routine Distributions

16. (SBU) Post distributes electronic and hard copies of the IIP Bureau's Arabic language Washington File (WF) daily to 79 selected Iraqi recipients, including content relating to the constitutional process in Iraq. IIP-sourced material, together with locally generated content, is routinely repurposed and posted in Arabic on the Mission website (<http://iraq.usembassy.gov>). Post has ordered and distributed through various networks large quantities of IIP Arabic language publications over the past six months, including Democracy Papers (5,325 copies), Rights of the People (5,432 copies), Outline of the U.S. Government (3,268 copies), About America: Constitution of the USA (2,160 copies), and a Responsible Press Office (1,050 copies).

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PA Section Cultural Projects  
And Small Grants

17. (SBU) The PA Section in Baghdad during FY05 has awarded more than \$177,000 in program grants (not including travel grants) many in support of projects related to the constitution process, e.g.,

1A. \$25,000 to an Iraqi NGO to cover costs to develop, design, print and distribute a special countrywide newspaper insert "Principles of

Democracy."

1B. \$22,000 to an Iraqi NGO to fund a conference in Basrah on the topic of Federalism.

1C. Proposals are pending for additional grants for a series of conferences on "Women and the Constitution" and a Film Festival in Sulaimaniya on Democracy.

18. (SBU) PA Section's cultural office also managed programs during this fiscal year in direct support of encouraging Iraqis to participate in the democratic process:

1A. Third Quarter International Visitor Leadership Group Project (May-June `05) on Federalism that sent 19 Iraqi parliamentarians on a two-week program that finished just as the constitution drafting process began.

1B. 30 percent (\$50,000) of post's total Arabic book program purchases for this year were for democracy and constitution-related titles.

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Comment

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19. (LOU) Comment: The above list of programs is not a comprehensive inventory of everything post has done in recent months to program on the constitution. It does not, for example, include extensive Iraqi and pan-Arab television advertising supporting the constitution process on which Embassy PA collaborates with MNF-I's Strategic Effects Directorate to supervise (and sometimes fund). We believe it useful to remind at this time just how much of our total effort to influence public perceptions and behaviors in Iraq with regard to the constitution, and the political process generally, is taking place in channels other than our higher-visibility, day-to-day relations with the major news media. End Comment.

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